

# Why Must I Suffer?

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Ao Oni!AU. We made more and more mistakes, and I have tried to fix them over and over again. Nothing is working. They keep on dying, or disappearing. I've died countless times trying to save everyone, and I've fought for our freedom, but it seems that this time will be the same as the others, and I will have to start over again.

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## Loop 15 And Counting

"RUN! DO NOT LOOK BACK, RUN!"

I ran as ordered, as fast as my feet could carry me. The screams of the monsters and beasts behind us making our frantic steps quicker, barely making it down the second to last flight of stairs without falling or tripping over one another. We could see the last flight that led to the front door, our freedom gate locking us inside. Another monster stepped into our path, and Sanageyama immediately shot out to attack it, not caring for the fact the beast in front of us rose one of its over-sized fists, swinging it toward the catapulting Sanageyama. He brandished his swords, ready to swing out against it blindly.

"SANAGEYAMA!" Lady Satsuki yelled, but her yell of alert did not reach Sanageyama in time.

He couldn't dodge in time as the fist slammed into his ribcage, immediately crumpling in his left side and sending him into the wall. He sagged down the wall in a pool of his blood, the now bent and broken beyond recognition Elite member dead instantly. The monster sauntered toward the body, and Lady Satsuki took the chance and drew Bakuzan, slicing through his neck and cleanly decapitating it, clearing the path once more.

"Ryuuko, Iori, Hakodate, Takaharu, Mikisugi, and now Sanageyama..." I heard Inumuta mutter as we hid inside one of the rooms we had a key for, safe for the moment thanks to the locks. I quickly looked around, confirming his list of the dead. Half of the original people who entered were long dead, and most we lost in the beginning due to an ambush.

Nonon, Mankanshoku, Inumuta, Maiko, myself and Lady Satsuki were the last survivors in this god-forsaken hell hole of a mansion. Everyone sat by themselves, excluding Nonon who, as predicted, sat the nearest Lady Satsuki for obvious comfort as she still shook from

the amount of loss we suffered. Mankanshoku sat on top of the lone bed in the room, still crying heavy tears for the loss of her closest friend, whom had been the second to last to go.

Ryuuko had been brutally murdered by one of the monsters as she defended Mankanshoku from the hit destined to kill her. An honorable way to go in any other situation, but getting killed by one of those freaks makes the loss burn even more, even with the noble intention.

Seeing Mankanshoku cry without comfort hurt made waiting for action much harder. A dull but insistent burn in my chest to do something seeing that no one else made the move to do so. I swallowed my pride and fluster and approached her, silently sitting beside her and wiping away her tears. She flinched, but did not stop my help. Instead, she leaned toward me, the soft whimpering I could pick up under her breath disappearing. Her tears slowed until not one built up in the corners of her eyes, a mournful sigh escaping her. She looked toward me, a smile appearing on her lips as well as her thanks for my comfort. I knew not only Ryuuko's death weighed on her shoulders, seeing that Sanageyama's horrific murder happened not a few feet from all of us. She gently pushed my hand away and finally let a normal breath of air free, the tension in her body lessening.

"Thank you." she spoke quietly, setting her hands on top of mine. I nodded in response, squeezing her hands softly before turning my attention to Nonon, who had gotten up from her spot with rather unneeded excitement for the moment, something grasped within her hands.

"What is it now, Nonon? It would be best to stay silent." Inumuta scolded her. She waved him off with a huff.

"Shut up and listen! I started picking through my pockets when I found this."

She raised a heavy bronze key. It sported obvious age, with a large embossed seal of three diamonds over-locking as well as a vintage feel to the key, something with obvious age. It had visible details on it that matched the door that they entered from. My heart stopped as I realized what that key meant to us.

"It cannot be..." the words fell from my lips faster than my mind could stop them. Could it be the key that could let us out?

We moved to see the key, trying to tell if the key truly would be our salvation to get out. Lady Satsuki took the key, and looked it over, flipping it over to look over each detail of the key.

"I do not care how this key came into your possession, Nonon, but we have our way out of here."

No one cheered, not even I, but we started to collect what we scattered in our time of hiding, and readied to exit and run for our exit at long last. Mankanshoku nudged my side as she passed me, her eyes alight with her powerful fire. I did not nudge her back, but I am glad to see her ready to fight for freedom.

Lady Satsuki gave us a three-second countdown and we surged as a group out of the room, slaughtering two smaller monsters in our path as we ran down the hallway and down the last flight of stairs that divided us and freedom. The others ran ahead of me, while I busied myself with defense in the back. The monsters gathered behind me on the visible balcony of the second floor, letting us go toward the front door.

I heard and saw Lady Satsuki put the key within its place, the lock breaking and the doorknob beginning to turn. I stepped up toward them, still guarding the rear when I felt a jolt run through me, her voice suddenly whispering in my ears.

"Just where are you going?"

Fear settled within me, and I stopped in the middle of the foyer. The others gathered in front of the door as Lady Satsuki threw the oaken door open, sunlight pouring into the dim room. Maiko cried for freedom as everyone ran outside, their silhouettes visible from where I stood from as they ran into the light of day, their cries of freedom loud enough for me to hear.

The door swung closed behind them a moment later, and the lock reengaged. I turned toward the second floor and watched the monsters mill in the above balcony near their master, the blonde pigtailed of the girl swaying in her freakish, unnatural wind. Her smile told me what I needed to know, and I turned to the door as the pounding began.

The shouting came quickly from the outside, their thoughts clear now that they left one person inside, one vital person still at the mercy of this hell, but they were too late. They remembered me too late.

I am dead already. I died without a witness, without a single person to witness my final moments. No one cried for my death. No one remembered that I had entered this place with them, the spell upon them keeping me from their memory.

I, Ira Gamagoori, belong to this home now. A specter within Nui Harime's monstrous, torturous game of house.

Nui stepped closer to the balcony. "So, Gamagoori... shall we find that clock and prepare for the next loop?"

I have no choice but to find that clock, I wanted to say to her, but I knew if I spoke up she would make everyone pay hell the next time, as she did this time with the early ambush. I nodded as I always have, obeying her rules in her game, and watched her disappear with her pets back to the main chambers hidden within the home, locked behind their puzzles and countless keys.

As I have for the last fifteen loops, I started my search for the grandfather clock that would send me back to the beginning, return

my companions, and restart our journey to freedom.

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***If you did not pick up on it, this story came from inspiration from Ao Oni, a famous RPG game that spawned a near franchise. I also took ideas from Hetaoni, Hetalia's take on Ao Oni.***

***I'm debating on continuing this, or I can write the version I thought of with Satsuki as our main. Leave a review with your opinion. Should this continue?***

# The Road I Fled On

Deep within the woods and isolated region of Japan rests a dilapidated, abandoned mansion. No one has dared go near this home, for stories surfaced and spread that resting inside was a monster that would steal you away from reality. Other rumors surfaced that any who even step on the gated property were doomed a messy death. Death, mutilation, loss of your existence, the rumors spanned every dark and disturbing idea imaginable, yet no one dared question them. Fear controlled what they thought of the house, even though no one dared confirm them. For years, these rumors kept most daredevils, the superstitious, and children from finding the hidden mansion, keeping what darkness truly wait inside away from the masses.

Many stupid or unwise teens and young adults would round the gated area, trying to see into the dust-covered windows of the mansion in hopes of seeing the monsters inside. A few dared step through the threshold of the broken gate, only to scamper back in complete fear.

We only discovered the home when Sanageyama and his gang were surveying lands for expansions of his company, and stopped short when years of rumor and myth rose from the dead. You can say he started all of this, finding it and telling everyone to check it out, but that would be putting balme on an innocent party. He simply wanted to show us this mansion surrounded by death rumors. He meant no harm. He didn't mean for us to enter the building, he didn't mean to get all of us killed.

All of us except for me.

The first time we were here, my first loop, we had no clue what was to happen. We armed ourselves before we entered, and did not expect to find the home spotless. We did not know where to begin, but we immediately wanted to leave. The door locked behind us, and it



sealed my, our, fate for eternity. We were split up from the beginning, several of us chased away by Nui's monsters. We all ended up in pairs of twos, and from there it turned into a slaughterfest.

Maiko and Mikisugi went down first I found out later, brutally ripped into shreds by a larger monster in the basement, which was unlocked unlike the other loops following this one. We did not find what was left of them until circumstances arose to find refuge in the room they died in. We were down four people by then, losing Inumuta and Iori in our recent battle. We never found their bodies, or their weapons.

From then on, we collected clues and keys as we ran for our lives, avoiding battle when we could. Wounds collected quickly, and we lost Hakodate to a fatal wound to her thigh, bleeding out to death in Takaharu's arms. I guess you can say that their rivalry ended there, but a lot of other things ended.

We eventually found solace on the first floor, and some hope, as we finally solved a difficult puzzle into a secret room, but our hope ended when we turned on the lights. Blood decorated the walls, a perfect white piano sitting in the middle of the gory decorations. We camped there for a while until we were forced to run once more through the house, splitting apart again as we escaped an ambush by three of the monsters.

It did not take long for more of them to die off. Nonon hit her dead-end in the piano room, dying on the ivory keys she had played earlier for comfort. Ryuuko and Sanageyama died together in another secret space leading down from the first floor, fighting off what I would learn later is Nui who grew upset that her prey had come too close to freedom. Takaharu died beside me as we kept a swarm back from rushing Lady Satsuki as she tried to open a room we could open, now locked.

The last three, Lady Satsuki, Mako and myself. We worked so hard to get to the end, sacrificing and taking hits to reach the hidden floors above us, finding out what the house hid in the bloodied rooms we

roamed. We barely survived but we found the dead-end room, a plain white room with a key at the other end. We walked in, and hell broke loose as monsters appeared, and to this day I don't remember what happened when one of the monsters knocked me unconscious.

When I woke up, I knew I didn't want to see what was around me. I found the monsters completely missing from the room, blood stains the only evidence of any conflict. Lady Satsuki and Mako were dead when I finally rose my eyes from the floor, propped against the wall just below the key to our freedom. I could not do anything for them except give my respect, pick up their weapons and run for them. The front door opened as I turned the key, the sound of thunder booming above me as I exited alone, blood coating me in sickly red patches.

All I could do was numbly walk across the browning yard until I only had a few steps left to freedom. I stopped, and turned to face Nui. Lightning and thunder clapped and roared above us as the rain came down, the water becoming no more than a nuisance.

Nui did not speak to me, but I could tell she had a mouthful to say. At the time, I did not know her, and honestly she frightened me. She could only be the person making this happen, and for that fear instilled within me.

"I want to go back." I demanded. She looked curiously at me before the most darkest smile appeared on her face.

"You want to relive their deaths? Do you really want to stay with me for their pathetic lives?" was Nui's reply. Her first words to me, and I already knew I had to best her, to keep everyone safe.

"I don't care if I must sacrifice myself again and again, they all deserve to be free from this hell. Send me back!"

She said one more thing to me, words I partly wished I took to heart before I descended this far into her game. She told me this:

"You will regret it for as long as it takes."

I did not care then. I needed to save them, I needed to free them from this life of death. I stepped toward that frilly pink demon, and reiterated my demand again.

"SEND ME BACK NOW!"

I didn't realized I had been sent back until I opened my eyes after a flash of lightning blinded me. Everyone was alive again, we were approaching the mansion front door. Nui sent me back as I demanded to save everyone. I got a restart to make up for my mistakes, to keep everyone together and alive until the end. When we finally made it inside and found some peace after investigating the kitchen, I told my story. I admitted the horrors I saw, the monster that would come, and the death to happen.

No one believed me. I guess I had it coming now that I think about it, I must have sound crazy to all of them. Even Lady Satsuki denied my wild story, dismissing it as folklore as fake as the rumors surrounding the home, and ordered me to drop the tale. For once in my time following her, I did not want to obey her orders. My knowledge could save us all, and yet she joined the others in calling me 'crazy' and 'ill of mind'. I swallowed down my words, and tried my best to follow her order, but as the loop progressed, and we barely survived through the attacks, surprise assault, and uncertain hiding and puzzle solving, I started to believe that maybe not following what I had to offer would be right.

We were nearing the final room, the final floors that held our freedom when tragedy struck us.

Nui appeared, and decided this loop had bored her to no end thanks to no deaths, and decided to target me. I could only freeze as it felt like a thousand hot iron spikes pierced through my torso. The other's screams, Mako's over the others, hit my ears as I hit the floor, a bloodied mess from Nui's silent murder.

The loop ended for me at least with the sight of Ryuuko chasing down Mako as she ran from the room. Otherwise, my memory of the

loop drops dead. Even as I wait out the period between loop changes, I still do not know what happened to have the loops continue as they do now. It should have stopped there, but here I am, going on into loop sixteen.

I swear if this loop isn't my last, I'm not going to survive mentally much longer. I can only hide what I've seen and felt and done for so long. I do not want to admit this but it's the truth now.

My resolve is starting to develop cracks, and they're threatening to deepen until they shatter it whole.

"Well maybe then, the fun will really begin~"

Nui would obviously be here, stalling the change. I dared not open my eyes, but answered her.

"I refuse to crack under your pressure. You will not win."

"Says the man who is showing obvious wear and tear. Your rationality, your resolve, everything will break soon, and then your fight truly begins!"

She disappeared without another giggle, and I opened my eyes, sunlight temporarily blinding me as I walked alongside Sanageyama and Nonon, approaching the mansion once more. I could easily see Nui's silhouette in the second floor window above, and I knew she could see the expression I gave her. She vanished, and I quickly sighed to help calm myself.

Nui is simply a distraction. Focus on them, on the others. They matter more this loop than you have ever mattered.

## Trapped Insanity and Clocks

*Where did it go? I have to find it, without it I can't go back! Please, please, please tell me I hid it there-!*

*NO! NO! No, please it has to be here. The clues led to here, why isn't it there? Did I make a mistake, or did someone move it? No, no one else knows about it, so I should be-*

*"Say goodbye to your freedom, pest."*

I hadn't realized I fell asleep, or at most dozed off in my duty to stand guard. I worried on what I saw, what I heard. Those weren't my personal memories. They were someone else's, from another loop, but from when? How and why would I remember someone else's thoughts and memories, yet have no clue who it was?

We were not far into the loop, camped out in the one room on the second floor with a fireplace, trying to fight the sudden cold entering the mansion floors. Nobody slept without something over them, or someone cuddled against them. Surprisingly, Mankanshoku lay alone seeing that Sanageyama decided to take risks and get close to Ryuuko, who was obviously too cold to argue against the act. She curled up into herself, her sleep obviously interrupted by nightmares filled with Nui's beasts. Her lips moved but no sound came out of them, and for that I'm grateful.

The silence scared me, but it also became a comfort. It meant that Nui was busy somewhere else, and those beasts were away from us.

No deaths, no injuries that caused too much panic, and safe thoughts overall I believe. They were sleeping as they ought to, fighting the horror fresh to them. Even though the pointless number of loops have shown that their fear and anger pushes us to fight until our end game, they were the young, naïve children in this game of

run and die, shoved into the nightmarish game and told to defeat the boss with no help.

The fire behind us crackled as the fire took the life of another log, light flickering over the shadows it manipulated. The dark room could easily tell my story of how I, how we, all looked on this situation now. I could not tell of my journey, and they could not find a solution to the entrapment. We were left with the shadows of memories and what life and fire we had to fight through the terrors of this madhouse to get to our freedom.

Mankanshoku's makeshift bed moved in a rustle of fabric, her voice growing stronger under her guise of sleep. Her eyes were not closed as I investigated, but barely cracked open, the betraying cracks showing her darkened brown irises. She did not seem to see me, or register my presence, but the words she whispered told another story.

"I believe your story. You're not making it up, I know that. I..."

Wait a moment, why does this sound familiar? Believing a story? What is she-

"Gamagoori, you're not... alone."

Her mumbling silenced as her mind calmed and emptied of her thoughts, setting her on her path into sleep. Her words sent me down a path of confusion. Her words made sense, but at the same time did not. The only time I ever told of what happened here was in the cut-short second loop, fourteen times ago. How in all that kept us safe could she possibly know about it?

*I have to remember, think! That riddle has to lead me to it. 'Where the sight of cliffs never ends and lies where you drop, yet what you seek sits safely atop one', what does it mean?! It's leading me to what I need all this time! I need to think, thin, think...*

*Cliffs, benches, things with a drop. Stairs? No. The hole in the third floor, chairs... THAT'S IT! That's it! So a room with enough chairs to see on forever, where could that be? Um, think more, think more. You need to think!*

*If you don't do this, G-*

*"I've already met death, no need to help me along."*

I blinked out of the sudden noise and shouting of the memory, having enough control to back away from Mako but not enough to calmly sit back in my chair, choosing instead the floor beside it. Miscellaneous words and yells filled my mind, drowning out the sounds around me. My mind felt assaulted by the sudden flood of memories, and I tried to stay quiet as I fought whatever fought within my head. Even over the din of nonsense in my mind, I could hear the scraping of a monster outside, but it went down the hall again. I made sure the door locked firmly, so I didn't have to worry about them coming in.

*I'm sorry for running away like that. I'm sorry for being the weak one in the group. I'm so sorry for not believing you. I want to fix the mistake made here. I need to find it so I can fix the mistake. You can't fix it anymore, so I will. That girl, the one with pigtails that haunts your shadows, left a message for me.*

*'Once the king falls to his knees, sunken in insanity, his queen must sacrifice itself to take his bloodied throne.'*

*I don't understand it, but what she left on that piece of paper had lead me this far. I won't stop now. I can't let this be the end.*

*What you went through, the pain and blood of it all, I will fight with you until the end. Until I fall at my finale, I will fight with you. You are not alone, and you never will be again.*

Please stop this. I don't want to hear this, why am I looking into a memory that isn't mine? It hurts.

*Gamagoori... don't cry, please. We're sorry.*

*I'm sorry. I'm SoRRy, i'M SOrrY, I'M soRRy, i'M soRrY, wE'Re SorRy, dO'nT Let YoURseLf DIe hERe.*

*We SHould HAVe LIstEned tO yOU, buT We wERE wRONG aND SILenCeD yOU.*

*AnD NoW YoU'rE dYiNg By NuL's HaNdS. StOp FlghTinG iT. YoU KnOW WhAT wAiTs fOR yOu.*

No. No, stop it. I will not submit to her claims of insanity! I am not going insane! I don't want to hurt my friends, leave me alone! Please, the last thing I need...

*YoU nEEd tO aCcEpT yOuR fAtE wIth iNsAnItY! YOu wILL eNd uP nO wHeRe NEar NOrMaLcY AgAiN! DoN'T bE AFraId Of It, IrA gAmAgOoRi. YoU wILL bE aLriGHt, SiMPLy UnLoCk ThE gAtEs On YoUr MeMoRiEs AnD lEt Go Of ThIs HeLL.*

Something felt wrong, very, very wrong about this, but at the same time, it sounded right. I couldn't hold all of my memories without a torturous flash every moment of my life, or keep down these unshed and hidden emotions forever. What would be the harm in returning them just for a moment. I opened my eyes, surveying the still sleeping piles of people around me, and close them again once I finished my quick scan. I should open my vault of memories, I should see what is missing.

*tHaT's RiGHt, rEtUrN yOuR rEpReSsEd ThOuGHts AnD sEe WhAt YoU hAvE sEaLeD aWaY.*

I sighed and searched my mind, looking for what vault I hid my memories in, finding it hidden behind much unneeded thoughts. The voice that spoke did not talk as I attempted to open it, and let what hell rested inside out-

"Wake up, Gamagoori. Gamagoori, are you okay?"



I snapped out of the spell over me, looking up at Mankanshoku as she looked down at me, worry evident on her expression.

"Mankanshoku... thank you." I told her as I sat up, rubbing my forehead as my head throbbed with a headache. Mako sat down on her knees in front of me, setting a hand on top of my head.

"You're alright, right?"

"I'm okay, I didn't realize I fell asleep." a lie, a blatant lie but I did not want her to know what I truly went through. Mako's face tilted, looking confused and thoughtful for a moment, and I silently begged that she would accept my lie and go back to her bed.

She patted me on the head, and smiled softly. "I'll take the next shift, you look exhausted. Don't worry, the door's locked right?"

I gave in, unable to fight. The fight with whatever invaded my mind had me exhausted and unable to fight in this condition. I am the shield of Lady Satsuki and the only thing between everyone staying in this mansion and dying, but I'm still human. I still need sleep, and recovery.

"Keep an ear open, Mankanshoku." I told her before I slowly moved to where she originally lay, crawling under the covers and attempting to close my eyes, only to stare at the wall opposite of Mankanshoku. I could only see the burning visual of the demonic-like voice tempting me to insanity. This wasn't normal, but this wasn't something Nui would stoop to, not in a long shot. She couldn't enter my head like this.

Am I really going insane?

*SlEEp fOr NoW. yOu NeEd YoUr StReNgTh.*

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Mako sighed inwardly as she saw Gamagoori loosen up, tension fleeing him as he returned to the dreams he had lost for a long time.

She hadn't predicted what had transpired within him, and nothing in her journal pointed to the answers.

There was one clue, but she knew that solving it now would not help her. It was a nonsense riddle anyway, one she knew the pig-tailed girl threw at her to throw her off-balance, off track of her objective. She dug for her journal out, which she knew she hid within a crate propped near the fireplace, and flipped through the heavy pages until she reached the back, tugging out the slip of burned paper.

She read it over again, and replaced it in its original spot. It still made no sense to her. Who was the 'king'? Who's the 'queen'? She needed more time, more opportunity to think about the riddle, even if it was a trap for her.

She flipped to the middle of the book, where words slowly printed in a preview. Each sentence that appeared flashed to her before being printed permanently on the page. She ran her hands over the older words for this loop, trying to control her emotions as she recounted the events, however short they were.

She closed it when she noticed that Gamagoori rolled over to face her. She peeled her eyes from the leather cover of her book, and looked to the door, her hands groping for the staff she carried with her. She used it well as a bludgeoning weapon, and it could be transformed on either end as a bladed staff.

She relaxed again as Gamagoori settled back into sleep, however uneasy it is on him. She could not keep her mind off of the possibility that insanity could corrupt the one person who could save them all, and it frightened her how close her got to unleashing it tonight, or whatever time it was.

She opened her book again, and turned to today's page once more. Tears gathered in her eyes as the book spelled out the events.

'Mako realized that without Gamagoori, they would never leave. She has grown to care for him, possibly too much.'

"The book is wrong," Mako murmured, her voice soft enough to evade any pickup from open ears, "It isn't too much. If I didn't care this much, I would have never made it this far."

'Nui moves in her domain, but leaves the main group to their devices. Perhaps she had given everyone a rare breath.'

Mako closed her book and stepped toward the door. One more thing needed to be done before everyone awoke. She looked over at everyone, from Gamagoori to Satsuki, end to end, before taking her staff in hand, her book tucked into the back pocket of her jeans, and slowly opening the door.

She calmly left without a look back, but Gamagoori did not miss her leave of absence. He bit down on her hand, pushed away his frantic thoughts, and tried once more to find solace in sleep.

# The King, the Queen and their God

It hurts.

Is all that I can really think right now is that it hurts? Nothing else comes to mind besides the pain, the blinding white pain hitting me everywhere, yet something else pokes at the back of my head. I don't like it.

*MaKe It StOp BeFoRe I kllL yOu.*

They aren't hurting me. It's... it's her, it's that damned pigtailed bitch, Nui. She's the reason I'm in pain.

*ThEy DeSeRvE dEaTh, ShE dEsErVeS a DeAtH sO vIoLeNt ShE bLeEdS fOrEvEr.*

Shut up.

*YoU kNoW iT wllL eNd In A sEa Of BlOoD. nUi MuSt Be MuRdErEd. EvErYoNe MuSt Be KiLIEd. ThE kInG wltH hIs BlOoDiEd ThRoNe.*

I said be quiet! I would never murder them. I don't want to murder them! Be quiet, go away!

*NuI wllL nEvEr FrEe YoU. sHe WaNtS eNtErTaInMeNt aNd DeAtH iS hOw YoU dO iT. mUrDeR wllL sEt YoU fReE.*

Lies. I said shut up! If she wouldn't free me anyway, why would outright killing everyone do anything for me?

*BeCaUsE wHeN yOu EmBrAcE mE, yOu WiLl TaRgEt HeR flrSt AnD fReE eVeRyOnE.*

You're lying. I've already told you, be quiet. Your tricks to open your cage will not work.

*YoUr MeMoRiEs WiLl Be ReTuRnEd WhEtHeR yOu LiKe It Or NoT.  
yOuR tHe KiNg Of ThIs CoUrT, aNd YoUr ThRoNe NeEdS iTs  
TriBUtEs.*

What the hell are you talking about, me being a king? A throne without its tributes? I think my insanity lost its sanity.

*ThE qUeEn ThAt HoLdS tHe ScEpTeR kNoWs WhAt YoU sEeK, bUt  
ShE hEsItAtEs To AnSwEr HeR cAlL. bE sTiLl, KiNg, FoR tHiS  
cOuRt WiLl SoOn GaThEr ThE bOdLeS. yOu CaN nOt EsCaPe Me  
Or IgNoRe Me FoReVer.*

SHUT UP! I SAID SHUT UP, GO AWAY bEfOrE **i KiLi YoU** . IEaVe  
Me Th **E fUcK ALONE** n Ow Or **EVERYONE WILL SUFFER.**

---

"I am the king on the bloodied throne. I am the only person to ever challenge god, insanity taking the form of my crown."

"I am the god who controls you like puppets, deciding what entertainment you shall bring to my domain."

"And I am the queen, the powerful crown destined to see the kingdom fall into ruin."

"We are the main pieces of this chess game. The rest do not matter to us, for they are the pointless pawns and extra pieces. We rule this game, we truly play the game of thrones where we go against God... and lose until we became enslaved by memory-made insanity."

"You see, this looks like a game, but it is much more than such. It is a chess game."

"On one end stand me, the one enemy you face. I am God in this realm, the woman who decides what happens, who follows me, and who dies. My creations I saved ally with me, forever tasked with the other player's destruction. On

"On the other end stands the rest of them, the annoying little people I get to play with. The King, the man who made the pact to stay, is the only stupid person to ever challenge me to a game. He thought he could win, but every time..."

*'Checkmate. I win.'*

*'...'*

*'So, I own your pathetic friends no-'*

*'Rematch.'* he slammed his king piece back on the board.

"He would challenge me again, determined to save what he decided to bet. Forever stuck within this continual loop of pain, death, and loss, our dear king had fate deem his end by insanity, leading to everyone's ultimate end. The pawns, I don't have much to say about them. They do not interest me as much. Maybe the twin knights, but they fall in and out of favor ever since the rise of their queen.

"That damned queen, deciding to rise from her pathetic baby pawn status! She must be eliminated, but I can not do it. I find my power over them is useless in this task. Now that she clings to that damned book, I can not harm her like I want to! She deserves to be maimed, destroyed, crushed beyond recognition and hung on the living room mantle for her beloved King to see! ShE dEsErVeS eTeRnAl DeAtH fOr HeR iNtErVeNtIoN!

"Forgive me. The queen already knows her destiny, but she still has not figured it out. Her crown is about to turn red with blood, her scepter about to show her the way. Maybe it will be fun watching her face as the king slaughters everyone."

"Everyone will suffer for the pain she's caused me."

"You will not survive what hell you will bring."

"ThAt Is FiNe By Me. ThEy WiLl EiThEr MoVe Or **DiE** iN mY pAtH."

"... you're coming along well, Gamagoori. Let the wrath consume your everything."

---

Mako didn't understand what was happening. One moment they were running for their lives, trying to escape that pigtail girl and her demons, and the next they were watching from their spot in the foyer as Gamagoori roared out in pain.

Nui watched in obvious amusement on the balcony as Gamagoori struggled with himself, knowing what came next. Mako wanted to run up to him, to try to soothe him but she couldn't find the strength to move. Her mind couldn't believe what she saw in front of her, wrapping around Gamagoori like a demonic haze. Tendrils of pure shadow curled around him like loving arms, tightening and twisting at their pleasure. No one had the heart to move to him, for most of them fought the beasts sent after them.

Mako didn't realize she had taken out her riddle until she read the words once more. The words finally made sense. The answer clicked into place.

*'Once the king falls to his knees, sunken in insanity, his queen must sacrifice itself to take his bloodied throne.'*

The king... it was Gamagoori all along. He was going insane with the amount of memories stored inside of him. All the death, war, loss and blood finally broke from their repressive cages and ate at his sanity once and for all. His insanity was eating him alive before their eyes, his crown burned on to his head in black and blood.

"I'm the queen..." She knew her place for a long time, but her mind never connected the dots until now. Her book, telling the events of each loop like it were a story, and her ability to go back in time. She simply took a different version of Gamagoori's bloodied game. She was the one at his side, fighting without knowing what he truly did.

And now it was her turn in this game to take action.

"Too late, little annoyance!" Nui shouted from her place, sitting on the railing, "The King has awoken."

Mako turned to Gamagoori as he slowly stood up again, the tendrils that wrapped around him missing from the picture. He looked normal, as he was when they began running, but he opened his eyes, and Mako's heart sank.

There was nothing but rage and insanity within his dark grey eyes, light absent in his usually soft eyes. He looked beyond humanly mad, the eyes of a determined, unnatural murderer. This wasn't Gamagoori anymore.

This was the mad king Ira.

"Gamagoori!" Mako turned to the group as they approached, all enemies earlier now defeated. When they locked eyes with Gamagoori, they knew in that moment they should run.

They failed. Gamagoori pulled out dual blades out of thin air, and ran at Ryuuko, who had begun to run at him. He stopped two feet behind her, and turned in time to watch her scream and gargle blood as she fell to the floor, four large gashes running through her body, blood spraying out of the gash on her neck.

Mako couldn't move as she heard Gamagoori yell, quoting his pain and fear and how he would use it to destroy them all. Her book fell out of her hands, flipping to the page where her logs lay. There was a new entry for the sixteenth loop.

'The king has fallen into his destined insanity. The end for everyone is near.'

Mako made an ugly, angry face and grabbed her book, standing up as Gamagoori stopped his slaughter of the others and let them run, turning his attention to Mako. Her eyes became unfocused, looking smoky and conflicted. She could see the tears slowly build as he



struggled against himself, but his insanity beat him as he brandished his weapons again, launching at her with incredible speed.

Mako instinctively raised her book, power and magic glowing through its spine as it worked its usual spells, pages flying out and building a shield for her, the razor-sharp pages flying around her at rates she couldn't make out. The blades hit her shield and bounced Gamagoori back, but he struck her a second time faster than her eyes could track him, sending her on her back, the book flying out her hands. The shield died away, the pages flying back into the book, giving Gamagoori time to try to attack her again. She rolled out of the path of his swing, but without getting nicked by one blade, her upper arm marked by a semi-deep slash. She ignored the pain and ran to the other side of the room, her hand flying for the book, willing it and whatever magic it held to respond to her.

The book flew from the floor, hitting Gamagoori in the head hard enough for him to recoil. The book hovered in front of her outstretched hand, the pages flying out once more and protecting her again. She could hear back-to-back snarls from Gamagoori and Nui, and she dodged an attack, quickly sending out her other hand, pages from her shield flying out to strike Gamagoori. Slashes, thin and shallow, showed up on his face.

Mako didn't want to attack him. She didn't want to hurt him. She wanted to hurt Nui for forcing them into this mess. She needed to get out of here. She needed... to travel in time once again.

The book knew her intentions, and it flew into her arms, settling between them and her chest. It started spinning until all she could see where its pages, the covers disappearing in the sea of paper. She held the book as her shield began to change, rotating forward as the power within the book charged for a jump through time. She could still see through the pages, trying not to cry as Gamagoori watched in demonic anger, trying to attack her through it, only to be launched back again and again, his anger only growing. Nui screamed for her cease ad desist, but they were too late.

By the time Gamagoori had gotten up again, Mako was gone, leaving behind a single page of paper.

Nui walked over and snatched it up, unfolding it and reading what had been printed on it out loud and immediately setting it on fire, a disgusting, angry snarl appearing on her face.

'You're not the only one who can travel in time'

"Sh-she... couldn't have gone through time. That book can not do that!" Nui snarled, smashing her hand into the staircase beside her, breaking the railing and part of the step itself, "She can not do that, it's against the rules! ShE cAn'T bE aBlE tO tRaVeL iN tImE! IRA!"

Gamagoori was already gone, screams filling the air of the mansion as they should have loops ago. Nui sighed and smiled as she found her peace in the anguish and fear of her prisoners.

She will deal with this little rebellious chess piece later.